

Mexico's 2021 and 2022 Tobacco Control Wins Driven by Collaborative Media Campaigns

Mexico made outstanding tobacco control progress in 2021 and 2022, with support from Vital and our partners. A comprehensive communication initiative, designed with local partners and in close coordination with the National Tobacco Control Office, shows the power of effective advocacy and highlights the importance of collaboration and persistence.

In Mexico, smoking is pervasive and poses a significant health risk. The National Survey of Tobacco, Alcohol and Drugs Consumption (ENCODAT) reports that 27% of men, 8.7% of women, 6.7% of boys and 3% of girls use tobacco. The average starting age for daily tobacco consumption in Mexico is 14.3 years, according to [ENCODAT](#). In light of this, Vital Strategies and its partners working in tobacco control in Mexico saw the need to launch an initiative about the dangers of secondhand smoke and to encourage support for robust tobacco control policies.

Vital and other local and international partners including Salud Justa, Refleacciona, The Union, and the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids began working together in 2017 to advocate for an update to the national tobacco control policy. Vital took on the work of disseminating campaigns to government decision-makers that reinforced the need for stronger policies to protect health. These efforts culminated in December 2021 when Mexico's General Tobacco Control Law was amended. The new law established 100% smoke-free environments, protecting people from secondhand smoke and emissions in public spaces, including bars and restaurants. The amendment also included a full ban on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship and prohibited the use of e-cigarettes in all smoke-free environments.

To support this, Vital generated media coverage in multiple outlets, including El Heraldo (radio and [op-ed](#)), [El Universal](#), Vertigo Politico, 24 Horas, [La Prensa](#) and even tweets from opinion leaders like Mariano Riva Palacio (journalist and the host of Forbes Mexico's streaming program), to stress the dangers of secondhand smoke and the need for stronger tobacco control policies. Interviews, news stories and op-eds that ran in national media outlets during this time generated publicity with an advertising value equivalent to more than \$2 million dollars and reached more than 50 million people.

This earned media coverage was only part of the initiative. Vital also launched several mass media campaigns, including videos that were shown on buses and posted on social media calling for [smoke-free](#)



Population

129.9 million

Smoking Prevalence

27% of men, 8.7% of women, 6.7% of boys, and 3% of girls use tobacco¹.

¹ National Survey of Drugs, 2017



In November of 2021, women from the Mexico Sin Humo campaign called for a ban on advertisement of tobacco products in Mexico's national newspaper. It read, "Smoke-free Mexico for a healthier and stronger economy."

[schools](#). An emotional video aired on TV, radio and social media and titled "[How Do I Explain It?](#)" highlighted how secondhand smoke can harm a child's health. The video reached more than 40 million people in Mexico.

A social media campaign rounded out the communication initiative, building engagement among over 70,000 people who signed an online petition at MexicoSinHumo.org.mx calling for a smoke-free Mexico. Media efforts also included a billboard campaign targeting senators and deputies near where they work and outlining the most important tobacco control policies as established by the World Health Organization under the [MPOWER](#) framework. This strategy was crucial in persuading decision-makers to prioritize public health over the economic interests of the tobacco industry.

After the law was passed, there were still several steps to implement its provisions for robust tobacco control. There were some setbacks: The tobacco industry deployed intense lobbying in an attempt to hinder the publication of the detailed regulations outlining how the law would be implemented. To counter this, Vital, in collaboration with other organizations, engaged in additional earned media activities, including press conferences and interviews, to emphasize the urgent need to publish the regulation. Vital also created a targeted social media campaign directed at decision-makers within the Ministry of Economy featuring a video in which the undersecretary of health promotion and prevention explains the advantages of further regulation to support full implementation and the urgency of its approval.

Finally, in December 2022, the federal government enacted the much-needed regulation for the General Tobacco Control Law. This regulation enables the law to be enforced by clearly establishing a list of 100% smoke-free places, including open spaces where people gather such as beaches, something Vital Strategies strongly supported as part of a 2022 [World No Tobacco Day campaign](#). The regulation also effectively bans all forms of tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship, without loopholes. As a result, cigarettes and other tobacco products must now be kept in closed cabinets and remain out of the sight of customers.

The passing of the 2021 law and the approval of its regulations in 2022 were a victory for public health advocates in Mexico. Through perseverance and strategic communication, Vital Strategies and our partners achieved a significant milestone for public health which stands to reduce the prevalence of smoking, improve the health and well-being of millions of Mexicans, and save lives.

This case study is part of a series highlighting our work in the Bloomberg Initiative to Reduce Tobacco Use in priority countries.

About Vital Strategies

Vital Strategies is a global health organization that believes every person should be protected by a strong public health system. We work with governments and civil society in more than 73 countries to design and implement evidence-based strategies that tackle their most pressing public health problems. Our goal is to see governments adopt promising interventions at scale as rapidly as possible. To find out more, please visit www.vitalstrategies.org or Twitter [@VitalStrat](https://twitter.com/VitalStrat).